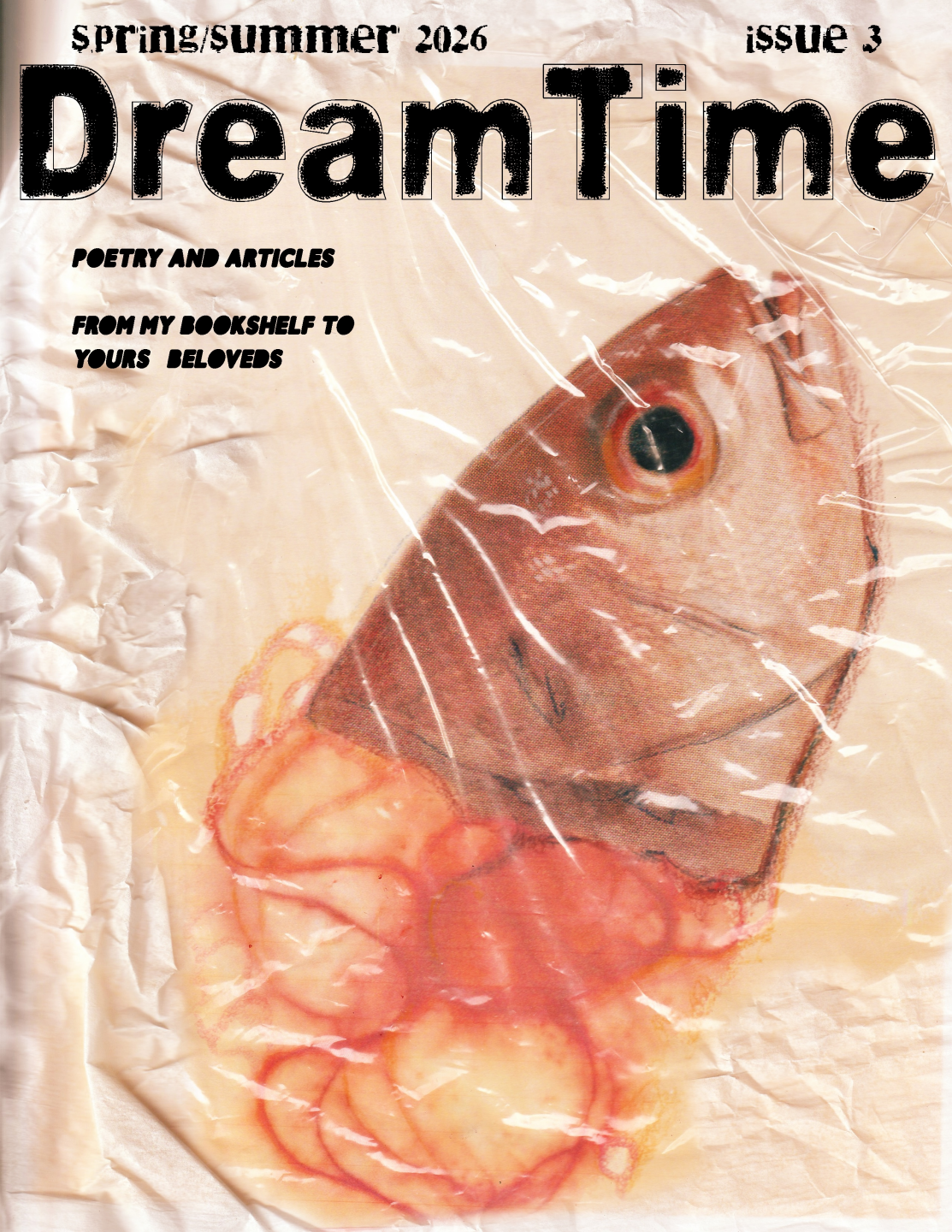
spring/summer 2026 issue 3

# DreamTime

POETRY AND ARTICLES

FROM MY BOOKSHELF TO YOURS BELOVEDS



# *Boy in a Stolen Evening Gown*

Saeed Jones

In this field of thistle, I am the improbable
lady. How I wear the word: sequined weight
snagging my saunter into overgrown grass, blonde
split-end blades. I waltz in an acre of bad wigs.

Sir who is no one, sir who is yet to come, I need you
to undo this zipped back, trace the chiffon
body I've borrowed. See how I switch my hips

for you, dry grass cracking under my pretend
high heels? Call me and I'm at your side,
one wildflower behind my ear. Ask me
and I'll slip out of this softness, the dress

a black cloud at my feet. I could be the boy
wearing nothing, a negligee of gnats.

# In Mexico, we try to discuss death

**and if we're living fast enough**
**and sex—if it's a good idea**
**to be selfless in bed**
**but the conversation wears**
**old like wallpaper and soon**
**we're swimming**
**beside Juan's boat again**
**the one with gas-blue**
**paint faded on the belly**
**in the shape of a fist**
**except it's never enough we agree**
**two jaundiced pufferfish**
**and a green sea turtle**
**both moving quiet as a hug**
**in the green Akumal afternoon—**
**they will lose each other**
**a thousand times before tomorrow—**
**we jump into death again**
**at dinner and agree the body**
**isn't meant for treading**
**the body isn't made to stay**

MARIA GIESBRECHT

## Author's Prayer

BY ILYA KAMINSKY

If I speak for the dead, I must leave
this animal of my body,

I must write the same poem over and over,
for an empty page is the white flag of their
surrender.

If I speak for them, I must walk on the edge
of myself, I must live as a blind man

who runs through rooms without
touching the furniture.

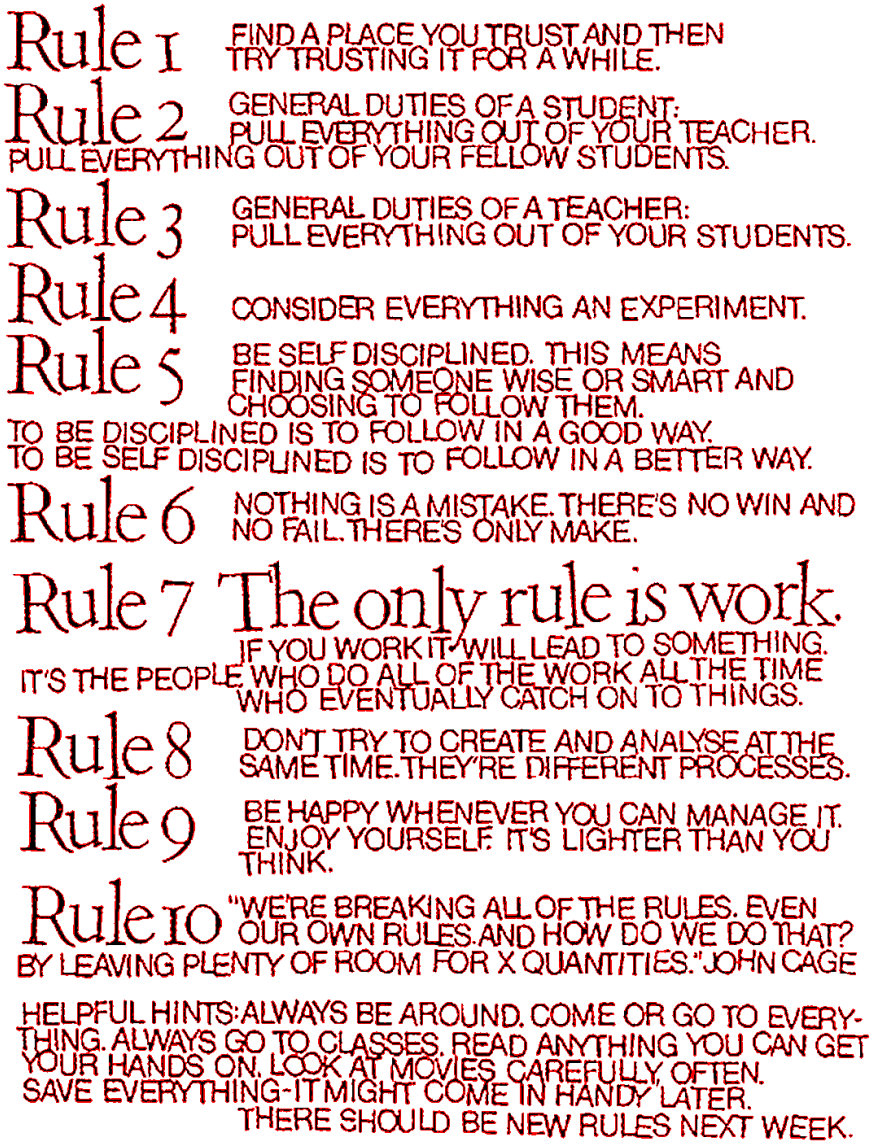
Yes, I live. I can cross the streets asking "What
year is it?"
I can dance in my sleep and laugh

in front of the mirror.
Even sleep is a prayer, Lord,

I will praise your madness, and
in a language not mine, speak

of music that wakes us, music
in which we move. For whatever I say

is a kind of petition, and the darkest
days must I praise.


Rule 1
FIND A PLACE YOU TRUST AND THEN TRY TRUSTING IT FOR A WHILE.
Rule 2
GENERAL DUTIES OF A STUDENT: PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER. PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.
Rule 3
GENERAL DUTIES OF A TEACHER: PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR STUDENTS.
Rule 4
CONSIDER EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT.
Rule 5
BE SELF DISCIPLINED. THIS MEANS FINDING SOMEONE WISE OR SMART AND CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THEM.
TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A GOOD WAY.
TO BE SELF DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A BETTER WAY.
Rule 6
NOTHING IS A MISTAKE. THERE'S NO WIN AND NO FAIL. THERE'S ONLY MAKE.
Rule 7
The only rule is work.
IF YOU WORK IT WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING.
IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO DO ALL OF THE WORK ALL THE TIME WHO EVENTUALLY CATCH ON TO THINGS.
Rule 8
DON'T TRY TO CREATE AND ANALYSE AT THE SAME TIME. THEY'RE DIFFERENT PROCESSES.
Rule 9
BE HAPPY WHENEVER YOU CAN MANAGE IT. ENJOY YOURSELF. IT'S LIGHTER THAN YOU THINK.
Rule 10
"WE'RE BREAKING ALL OF THE RULES. EVEN OUR OWN RULES. AND HOW DO WE DO THAT? BY LEAVING PLENTY OF ROOM FOR X QUANTITIES." JOHN CAGE
HELPFUL HINTS: ALWAYS BE AROUND. COME OR GO TO EVERYTHING. ALWAYS GO TO CLASSES. READ ANYTHING YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON. LOOK AT MOVIES CAREFULLY, OFTEN. SAVE EVERYTHING-IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER.
THERE SHOULD BE NEW RULES NEXT WEEK.

**Small Frogs Killed On The Highway**
Still,
I would leap too
Into the light,
If I had the chance.
It is everything, the wet green stalk of the field
On the other side of the road.
They crouch there, too, faltering in terror
And take strange wing. Many
Of the dead never moved, but many
Of the dead are alive forever in the split second
Auto headlights more sudden
Than their drivers know.
The drivers burrow backward into dank pools
Where nothing begets
Nothing.

Across the road, tadpoles are dancing
On the quarter thumbnail
Of the moon. They can't see,
Not yet.

## In the Kitchen

BY STACIE CASSARINO

It's right before you drive away:
our limbs still warm with sleep,
coffee sputtering out, the north
wind, your hips pressing me
hard against the table. I like it hard
because I need to remember this.
I want to say harder. How we must
look to the road that's gone,
to the splayed morning of cold
butter and inveterate greed.
Light comes and goes in the field.
Oranges in a bowl, garlic, radio.
In the story of us, no one wins.
*Isolation is a new theme*
someone says. By now
I've invented you. Most people
don't like to touch dead things.
That's what my friend tells me
when I find my fish on the floor.
It must have wanted an out.
Sometimes my desire scares me.
Sometimes I watch football
and think: four chances
is enough to get there. But
we don't have helmets.
I want to say harder,
I can take it, but
there's no proof I can.

# Dead Butterfly

BY ELLEN BASS

For months my daughter carried
a dead monarch in a quart mason jar.
To and from school in her backpack,
to her only friend's house. At the dinner table
it sat like a guest alongside the pot roast.
She took it to bed, propped by her pillow.

Was it the year her brother was born?
Was this her own too-fragile baby
that had lived—so briefly—in its glassed world?
Or the year she refused to go to her father's house?
Was this the holding-her-breath girl she became there?

This plump child in her rolled-down socks
I sometimes wanted to haul back inside me
and carry safe again. What was her fierce
commitment? I never understood.
We just lived with the dead winged thing
as part of her, as part of us,
weightless in its heavy jar.

# Grief

BY BARBARA CROOKER

is a river you wade in until you get to the other side.
But I am here, stuck in the middle, water parting
around my ankles, moving downstream
over the flat rocks. I'm not able to lift a foot,
move on. Instead, I'm going to stay here
in the shallows with my sorrow, nurture it
like a cranky baby, rock it in my arms.
I don't want it to grow up, go to school, get married.
It's mine. Yes, the October sunlight wraps me
in its yellow shawl, and the air is sweet
as a golden Tokay. On the other side,
there are apples, grapes, walnuts,
and the rocks are warm from the sun.
But I'm going to stand here,
growing colder, until every inch
of my skin is numb. I can't cross over.
Then you really will be gone.

# *The Conditional*

**Ada Limón, 1976**

Say tomorrow doesn't come.
Say the moon becomes an icy pit.
Say the sweet-gum tree is petrified.
Say the sun's a foul black tire fire.
Say the owl's eyes are pinpricks.
Say the raccoon's a hot tar stain.
Say the shirt's plastic ditch-litter.
Say the kitchen's a cow's corpse.
Say we never get to see it: bright
future, stuck like a bum star, never
coming close, never dazzling.
Say we never meet her. Never him.
Say we spend our last moments staring
at each other, hands knotted together,
clutching the dog, watching the sky burn.
Say, It doesn't matter. Say, That would be
enough. Say you'd still want this: us alive,
right here, feeling lucky.

## A Drink of Water

by Jeffrey Harrison

When my nineteen-year-old son turns on the kitchen tap
and leans down over the sink and tilts his head sideways
to drink directly from the stream of cool water,
I think of my older brother, now almost ten years gone,
who used to do the same thing at that age;

and when he lifts his head back up and, satisfied,
wipes the water dripping from his cheek
with his shirtsleeve, it's the same casual gesture
my brother used to make; and I don't tell him
to use a glass, the way our father told my brother,

because I like remembering my brother
when he was young, decades before anything
went wrong, and I like the way my son
becomes a little more my brother for a moment
through this small habit born of a simple need,

which, natural and unprompted, ties them together
across the bounds of death, and across time …
as if the clear stream flowed between two worlds
and entered this one through the kitchen faucet,
my son and brother drinking the same water.

## In My Dreams

BY STEVIE SMITH

In my dreams I am always saying goodbye and
riding away,
Whither and why I know not nor do I care.
And the parting is sweet and the parting over is
sweeter,
And sweetest of all is the night and the rushing
air.

In my dreams they are always waving their
hands and saying goodbye,
And they give me the stirrup cup and I smile as
I drink,
I am glad the journey is set, I am glad I am
going,
I am glad, I am glad, that my friends don't
know what I think.

## Night Bird

BY DANUSHA LAMÉRIS

Hear me: sometimes thunder is just thunder.
The dog barking is only a dog. Leaves fall
from the trees because the days are getting shorter,
by which I mean not the days we have left,
but the actual length of time, given the tilt of earth
and distance from the sun. My nephew used to see
a therapist who mentioned that, at play,
he sank a toy ship and tried to save the captain.
*Not*, he said, *that we want to read anything into that.*
Who can read the world? Its paragraphs
of cloud and alphabets of dust. Just now
a night bird outside my window made a single,
plaintive cry that wafted up between the trees.
Not, I'm sure, that it was meant for me.

## An Epiphany

BY TED KOOSER

I have seen the Brown Recluse Spider
run with a net in her hand, or rather,
what resembled a net, what resembled
a hand. She ran down the gleaming white floor
of the bathtub, trailing a frail swirl
of hair, and in it the hull of a beetle
lay woven. The hair was my wife's,
long and dark, a few loose strands, a curl
she might idly have turned on a finger,
she might idly have twisted, speaking to me,
and the legs of the beetle were broken.

# *Nothing Wants to Suffer*

*after Linda Hogan*

Nothing wants to suffer. Not the wind
as it scrapes itself against the cliff. Not the
    cliff

being eaten, slowly, by the sea. The earth
    does not want
to suffer the rough tread of those who do
    not notice it.

The trees do not want to suffer the axe, nor
    see
their sisters felled by root rot, mildew, rust.

## Butchering

BY RHINA P. ESPAILLAT

My mother's mother, toughened by the farm,
hardened by infants' burials, used a knife
and swung an axe as if her woman's arm
wielded a man's hard will. Inured to life
and death alike, "What ails you now?" she'd say
ungently to the sick. She fed them, too,
roughly but well, and took the blood away—
and washed the dead, if there was that to do.
She told us children how the cows could sense
when their own calves were marked for butchering,
and how they lowed, their wordless eloquence
impossible to still with anything—
sweet clover, or her unremitting care.
She told it simply, but she faltered there.

# Tin Bucket

BY JENNY GEORGE

The world is not simple.
Anyone will tell you.
But have you ever washed a person's hair
over a tin bucket,
gently twisting the rope of it
to wring the water out?
At the end of everything,
dancers just use air as their material.
A voice keeps singing even
without an instrument.
You make your fingers into a comb.

FERRO

## The Gardener 85

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Who are you, reader, reading my poems an
hundred years hence?
I cannot send you one single flower from this
wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold
from yonder clouds.
Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant
memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred
years before.
In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy
that sang one spring morning, sending its glad
voice across an hundred years.

## Chiller Pansies

BY DEBRA WIERENGA

Your pansies died again today.
All June I've watched them scorch and fall
by noon, their faces folding down
to tissue-paper triangles.
I bring them back with water, words,
a pinch, but they are sick to death
of resurrection. You planted them
last fall, these "Chillers" guaranteed
to come again in spring. They returned
in April—you did not. You who said
*pick all you want, it just makes more!*
one day in 1963,
and I, a daughter raised on love
and miracles, believed it.

# *Ash Ode*

**Dean Young** 1955 – 2022

When I saw you ahead I ran two blocks
shouting your name then realizing it wasn't
you but some alarmed pretender, I went on
running, shouting now into the sky,
continuing your fame and luster. Since I've
been incinerated, I've oft returned to this
thought,
that all things loved are pursued and never
caught,
even as you slept beside me you were flying off.
At least what's never had can't be lost, the sieve
of self stuck with just some larger chunks,
jawbone,
wedding ring, a single repeated dream,
a lullaby in every elegy, descriptions
of the sea written in the desert, your broken
umbrella, me claiming I could fix it.

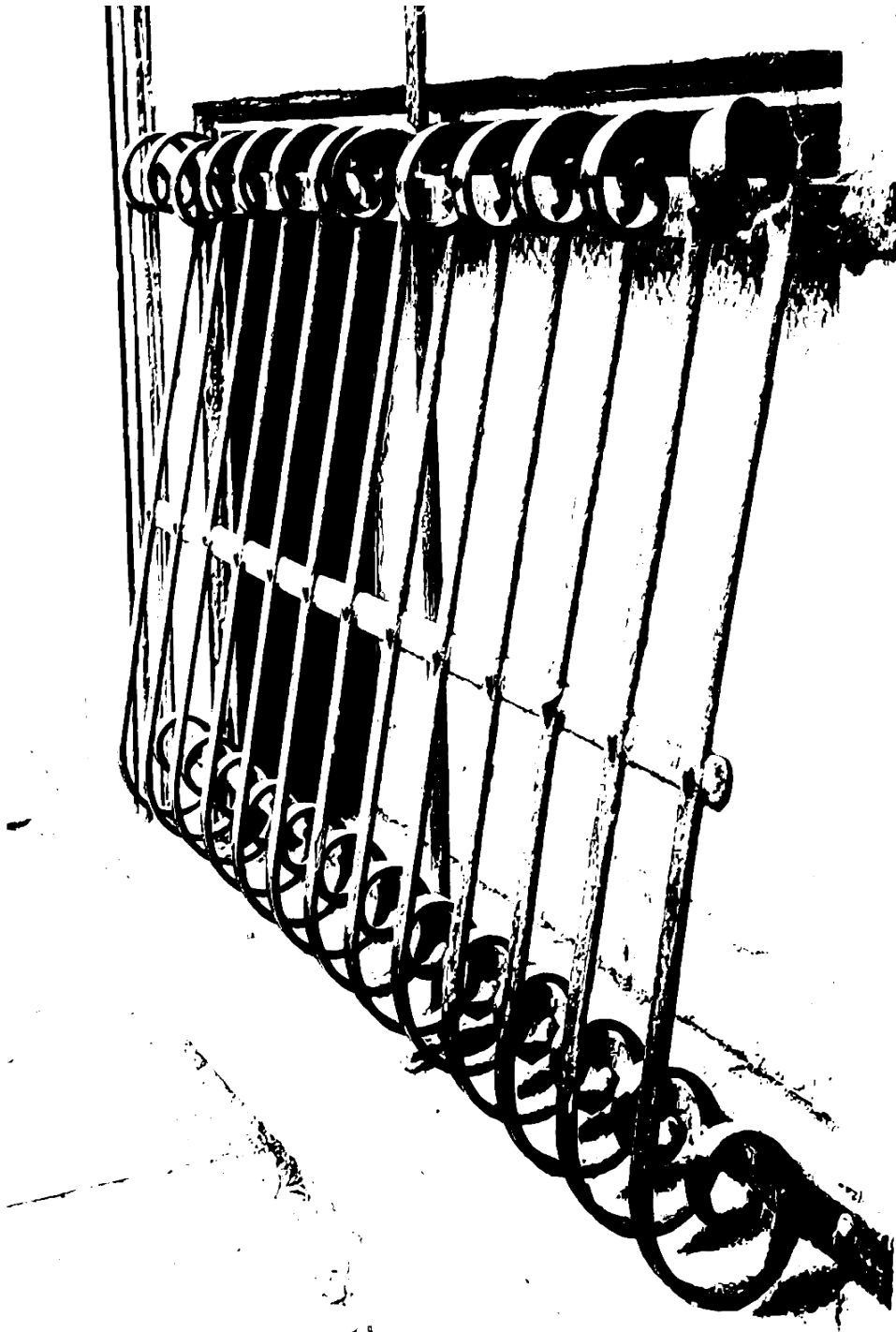
MARRIED LOVE

You and I
Have so much love,
That it
Burns like a fire,
In which we bake a lump of clay
Molded into a figure of you
And a figure of me.
Then we take both of them,
And break them into pieces,
And mix the pieces with water,
And mold again a figure of you,
And a figure of me.
I am in your clay.
You are in my clay.
In life we share a single quilt.
In death we will share one coffin.

# Temporary Job

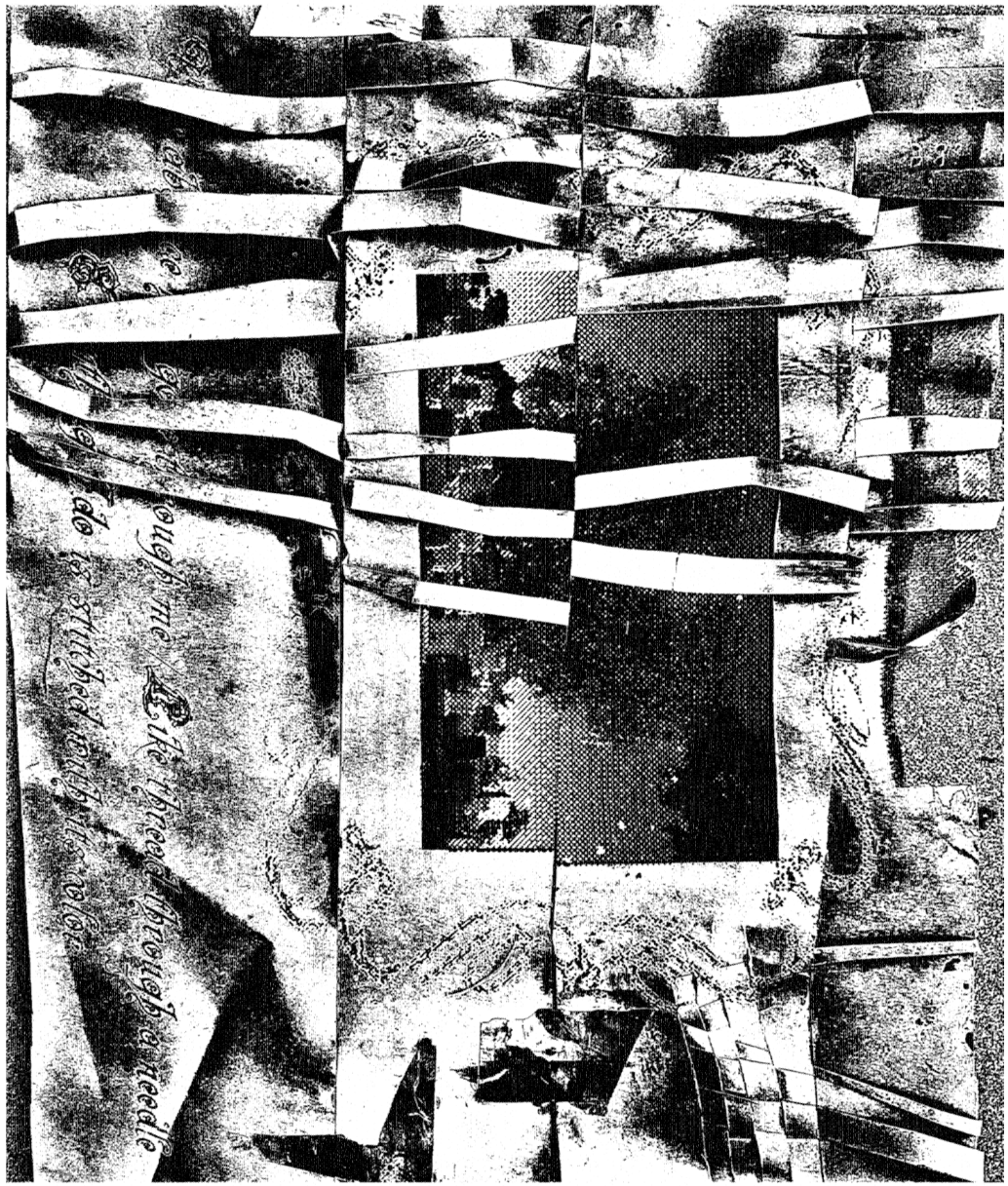
BY MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

Leaving again. If I didn't care, I wouldn't be
grieving. The particulars of place lodged in me,
like this room I lived in for eleven days,
how I learned the way the sun laid its palm
over the side window in the morning, heavy
light, how I'll never be held in that hand again.



## Andrea Gibson 1975 – 2025

Imagine, when a human dies,
the soul misses the body, actually grieves
the loss of its hands and all
they could hold. Misses the throat
closing shy
reading out loud on the first day of
school.
Imagine the soul misses the stubbed toe,
the loose tooth, the funny bone. The soul
still asks, *Why*
*does the funny bone do that? It's just*
*weird.*
Imagine the soul misses the thirsty
garden cheeks
watered by grief. Misses how the body
could sleep



# Can Stuffed Animals Have a Soul?

fig 1. Folkman's Lamb Puppet, named "Oblio"

AUTUMN WHITE. DREAMTIME PRODUCTION. AMWILLUSTRATOR.WEEBLY.COM

## That depends, of course, on what you mean by "soul."

The theory of "Object Biographies" draws attention to the individual histories of objects and how they change over time: think of your kitchen table, a stuffed animal at an estate sale, a tree carved by lovers, a used bullet. Object biographies narrate how these objects collect history as they pass through time, as we all do. Objects are influenced by who owns them, what they were used for, where they came from, how they were curated or displayed... it foregrounds the narrative of an individual artifact. We anthropomorphize the object to better understand it, though interdisciplinary scholars warn that this practice has limits: " To have a 'biography' implies biological and mental development, which objects typically do not have. Are young objects less settled and do objects grow wiser the older they get? Metaphors of birth, maturing, and death might cover up exclusively thing-specific characteristics" (Lehmann, Ann-Sophie. 2021. "Object Biography: The Life of a Concept," Lecture, Bard Graduate Research Center).

Since reading about object biographies several years ago, I have become increasingly interested in applying them to the social bodies of the interred as above-ground grave monuments. The separation between society, the actions of the bereaved, and the social presence, organization, and material assemblage of the dead is very thin. The emotional experience of a deteriorating cemetery, like Felton Cemetery, webbed over by sandy loam, turkey feathers, and thickening underbrush, is as formative to my assessment of the interred and their identities as the monuments themselves are. Isolation and rates of decay, theft, defacement, and overgrowth influence how people visit the site and engage with it (evidenced by the almost complete absence of Felton Cemetery photos on Findagrave, compared to other local sites). Do these headstones have a soul? Do the artifacts loved and left behind have souls, too?

They have histories worth seeking. All things hurtling through time collect layers of meaning, iterative and complex.

Look around. Listen, search. What souls are reaching out to you, now?

# My Brother Out of Rehab, Points,

Ron Riekki

as we drive down the street, says, *They sell there,*
*and there. And there . . . And there.* The pauses,

him waiting, then pointing—a McDonald's, an alley,
a veterinary clinic, an apartment complex. *Where's*

*God?* he says. I wait. His hand circles around a full
360, like he's making a halo for some ghost at his side,

and he says, *Everywhere.* And I'm not sure if: drugs
are God. Or if: God is God and he's a believer now.

Or if: he's high, even now, after just getting out.
Or if: he means that God is watching, or that God

is an addict too. Or if: he means nothing, just talking.
And I wait; and he waits. He points, whispers, *And there.*

I ask for the privilege of not being born
... not to be born until you can assure me
of a loving home and family to protect me
and a right to live as long as I am
physically able to enjoy life... not
to be born until my body is precious and
men have ceased to exploit it because
It is cheap and plentiful

ON YOUR KNEES & GROV
TO BE PUNISHED
373 1284

polluters of flesh

DREAM

DEALERS IN DUST

displayers of LIES

A LITTLE TOXIC WASTE NEVER HURT NOBODY

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